**Understanding *Hamlet*’s “To Be or Not to Be” Soliloquy** **Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Directions:** Review Hamlet’s soliloquy. Then, on the right side, paste in the plain language version that represents each section. Read through it again and respond to the questions about the soliloquy.

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| To be, or not to be: that is the question:  Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer  The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  And by opposing end them? |  |
| To die: to sleep;  No more; and by a sleep to say we end  The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  That flesh is heir to, ‘tis a consummation  Devoutly to be wish’d. |  |
| To die, to sleep;  To sleep: perchance to dream: ay there’s the rub;  For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  Must give us pause—there's the respect  That makes calamity of so long life. |  |
| For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,  The insolence of office, and the spurns  That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  When he himself might his quietus make  With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  To grunt and sweat under a weary life, |  |
| But that the dread of something after death,  The undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn  No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  And makes us rather bear those ills we have  Than fly to others that we know not of? |  |
| Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,  And thus the native hue of resolution  Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  And enterprises of great pith and moment  With this regard their currents turn awry  And lose the name of action. |  |

1. What does Hamlet list as reasons for why a person might want to end their normal existence?
2. What does Hamlet list as reasons why a person might prefer to continue their normal existence?
3. Few people would dispute Hamlet by proclaiming that life is easy all of the time. Reflect on what Hamlet sees as the hardships of life. What do you consider to be the things that make life difficult for people in our time in general? Consider everyday experiences that add stress to our lives and also major disappointments most of us experience across our lifetimes.
4. Hamlet has a lot to say about what’s tough about life, but his reason to keep going is based on one distinct fear. Build on Hamlet’s perspective. What things motivate you or the average person to “keep going” in life? When we have bad days, what keeps the majority of us in mostly positive, productive states in the long run?

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| 1. Death is kind of like sleep. But then that causes a problem, because sometimes sleep and dreams can be disturbing. That’s what makes us put up with living for so long. |
| 1. I wonder if it’s more dignified to deal with life’s troubles or fight against the suffering by ending my life. |
| 1. Who would put up with getting old, being oppressed, being made fun of, relationship issues, injustices, corrupt leaders, and insults from rude people when we could just end our lives and get rest instead? |
| 1. Maybe in death the disappointments and conflicts that we feel as living humans would be gone. I truly wish for that. |
| 1. We might get big ideas about what we’ll do, but the more we think about it, the more we lose determination. We just do nothing in the end. |
| 1. Nobody would deal with these burdens except for the fact that we’re scared of what comes after death. You can’t come back from it and we know nothing about it, so we tolerate life on earth rather than go to the unknown. |